

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 IO-13 AID-05 IGA-02 OMB-01 TRSE-00 ACDA-12
/094 W

-----049341 182300Z /41

P R 181830Z JAN 78
FM AMEMBASSY QUITO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6980
INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
AMEMBASSY LIMA
AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 QUITO 0330

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, EC
SUBJECT: RETORNO: WHAT COMES NEXT?

REF: QUITO 0278

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: THE GENERAL PUBLIC AND POLITICAL PARTY
EUPHORIA CONTINUES THREE DAYS AFTER THE SUCCESSFUL JAN. 15
CONSTITUTIONAL REFERENDUM. ALTHOUGH SEVERAL OF THE PARTIES
INVOLVED IN THE VOTE NULLIFICATION CAMPAIGN ARE MUTTERING
ABOUT FRAUD, MOST PARTIES ARE EXPRESSING DELIGHT IN THE
RESULTS. WE EXPECT OPPOSITION TO THE RETORNO PROCESS TO
DIMINISH SIGNIFICANTLY. THE NEXT STEPS FOR THE GOE IN ITS
RETORNO PROCESS ARE THE CERTIFICATION OF THE REFERENDUM
RESULTS AND THE ISSUANCE OF THE NEW POLITICAL PARTIES AND
ELECTIONS LAWS. THE ISSUANCE OF THE NEW LEGISLATION PROVIDES
THE GOE WITH ITS LAST FORMAL CHANCE TO DISQUALIFY THE
CANDIDACY OF POPULIST ASSAD BUCARAM. GIVEN THE
GOVERNMENT'S JUSTIFIED OPTIMISM FROM THE REFERENDUM AND
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DOUBTS ABOUT BUCARAM'S CURRENT STRENGTH, THE EMBASSY
EXPECTS THE GOE TO RESIST THE TEMPTATION TO DISQUALIFY
HIM THROUGH MANIPULATION OF THE STATUTES. END SUMMARY.

2. THE EUPHORIA WITH WHICH MOST POLITICAL PARTIES
GREETED THE RESULTS OF THE JANUARY 15 CONSTITUTIONAL
REFERENDUM CONTINUES. MOST PARTIES THAT SUPPORTED THE

REFERENDUM HAVE ISSUED OPTIMISTIC STATEMENTS COMPLIMENTING THE VOTING PUBLIC FOR GOOD SENSE AND PATRIOTISM. THE MASSIVE TURNOUT AND THE MINIMAL SUCCESS OF THE NULLIFICATION CAMPAIGN HAVE INCREASED THE OPTIMISM OF MOST POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS THAT ECUADOR WILL SUCCEED IN ARRIVING AT THE JULY 16 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS. SEVERAL PARTIES ARE ALSO BUOYED BY THE PERCEPTION THAT POPULIST ASSAD BUCARAM IS CONSIDERABLY MORE VULNERABLE THAN PREDICTED IN THE LIGHT OF THE REFERENDUM RESULTS.

3. IN CONTRAST THE GENERAL ATMOSPHERE OF SATISFACTION FOLLOWING THE REFERENDUM, THOSE PARTIES WHICH HAD URGED THE NULLIFICATION OF REFERENDUM BALLOTS ARE BEGINNING THE EXPECTED SOUR-GRAPES CRITICISM. DIE-HARDS SUCH AS CARLOS JULIO AROSEMENA (PNR), PABLO DAVALOS DILLON (NATIONAL PONCISTA FRONT), AND THE VELASQUISTAS HAVE ACCUSED THE GOE OF FRAUD AND SWEAR TO CONTINUE THEIR OPPOSITION TO THE GOE RETORNO PLAN. IN THE GENERAL ATMOSPHERE OF OPTIMISM, HOWEVER, NO ONE SEEMS TO BE TAKING THEM SERIOUSLY. IN SPITE OF PROBLEMS OF VOTING AND IN THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE VOTING LISTS (THERE WERE MORE VOTES CAST THAN THERE WERE REGISTERED VOTERS), THE COMPLAINTS OF THE LOSERS ARE NOT SIGNIFICANT ENOUGH TO CALL INTO QUESTION EITHER THE LEGITIMACY OR SUCCESS OF THE REFERENDUM.

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4. THE NEXT FORMAL STEPS OF THE GOE'S RETORNO PLAN ARE THE OFFICIAL CERTIFICATION OF THE REFERENDUM RESULTS /EXPECTED IN ABOUT THREE WEEKS) AND THE ISSUANCE OF THE POLITICAL PARTIES AND ELECTIONS LAWS PREPARED BY THE THIRD COMMISSION (AFTER THE ALTERNATE CONSTITUTIONS WERE DRAFTED). GOE SPOKESMEN HAVE INDICATED THAT THE NEW LAWS WILL BE FIRST STUDIED BY THE GOVERNMENT AND WILL THEN GO INTO EFFECT.

5. THE GOE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE UPCOMING ISSUANCE OF THE NEW ELECTIONS AND POLITICAL PARTIES LAWS APPEARS TO INDICATE THAT THE GOE HAS REJECTED THE THESIS OF FORMER LIBERAL PARTY DIRECTOR PEDRO JOSE ARTETA THAT A SPECIAL AD HOC ELECTORAL STATUTE IS NEEDED FOR THE JULY PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION. ARTETA'S ARGUMENT WAS GENERALLY VIEWED AS AN ATTEMPT TO CREATE AN OPPORTUNITY TO DISQUALIFY THE CANDIDACY OF CURRENT FRONT-RUNNER ASSAD BUCARAM. IF THE GOE, AS IT DECLARES, INTENDS TO PUT INTO EFFECT THE THIRD COMMISSION'S PROJECTED LAWS (AS SET OUT IN THE RETORNO PLAN) ITS LAST CHANCE TO FORMALLY DISQUALIFY BUCARAM WILL BE A GOE-IMPOSED PROVISION IN THE NEW STATUTES.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 QUITO 0330

6. SEVERAL POLITICIANS, IN POST REFERENDUM COMMENTARY, NOTED THAT THE ELECTION RESULTS, PARTICULARLY IN GUAYAS, INDICATED BUCARAM'S POTENTIAL ELECTORAL WEAKNESS. THE EMBASSY SHARES THE VIEW THAT IF BUCARAM'S STRONG REFERENDUM PUSH HAD BEEN NOTABLY SUCCESSFUL, THE FIRST CONSTITUTION SHOWING WOULD HAVE BEEN HIGHER AND THE NULLIFICATION VOTE LOWER. THUS, MANY POLITICIANS ARE HEARTENED ABOUT THE POSSIBILITIES OF A BUCARAM DEFEAT IN JULY.

7. THE PRESIDENTIAL STOCK OF QUITO'S US-BORN MAYOR SIXTO DURAN-BALLEN IS SOARING SINCE THE STRONG SHOWING OF THE REFORMED 1945 CONSTITUTION IN THE REFERENDUM INDICATED THAT AN UNEXPECTEDLY LARGE CONSERVATIVE ELECTORATE STILL EXISTS. ALSO, IN RECENT WEEKS THERE HAS BEEN INCREASING EVIDENCE THAT DURAN-BALLEN, WHOSE FAMILY IS FROM GUAYAQUIL, IS SURPRISINGLY STRONG IN BUCARAM'S HOME BASE. THE CURRENT DURAN-BALLEN BOOM MAY PROVE STRONG ENOUGH TO OVERCOME LIBERAL DETERMINATION TO SEE ONE OF THEIR OWN NOMINATED AS THE
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CANDIDATE OF THE NATIONAL CONSTITUTIONAL FRONT.

8. GIVEN THEIR CONSIDERABLE SUCCESS IN THE REFERENDUM, COMBINED WITH THE FIRST INDICATIONS OF BUCARAM'S APPARENT ELECTORAL WEAKNESS, THE EMBASSY EXPECTS THAT THE GOE WILL SUCCESSFULLY RESIST THE TEMPTATION TO MANIPULATE THE ELECTIONS AND PARTIES LAWS TO DENY BUCARAM A CHANCE TO RUN. RATHER, THEY WILL LIKELY COUNT ON THE EMERGENCY OF A COALITION CANDIDATE WITH A GOOD CHANCE TO BEAT BUCARAM. THE CURRENT SITUATION CONSIDERABLY REDUCES INTERNAL PRESSURES ON THE MILITARY TO INTERVENE IN THEIR OWN ESTABLISHED PROCESS. THE BALANCE OF THE RETORNO PROCESS NOW APPEARS TO ENJOY A GREATER POSSIBILITY OF COMPLETION THAN AT AN EARLIER TIME AND THE POSSIBILITIES FOR COMPLETION OF THE PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN LEADING TO THE JULY 16 ELECTIONS SEEM RATHER GOOD. AFTER SUCCESSFULLY ARRIVING AT THE REFERENDUM, THE POLITICAL PARTIES NOW FACE THE CHALLENGE OF UNIFYING AND MANAGING A SUCCESSFUL SIX-MONTH LONG CAMPAIGN AND TAKING ADVANTAGE OF A POWERFULLY REAWAKENED NATIONAL CIVIC CONSCIOUSNESS.
BLOOMFIELD

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